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ABSTRACT

On the assumption that blacks teaching the white middle-class majority students could help prevent further social polarization of majority and minority groups and could best interpret minority experience and potential to our youth, an informal survey by letter and interview was initiated to assess suburban recruitment of black teachers. Reasons for the lack of recruitment of black teachers appear to include the following: a) inept teacher recruitment in general, rather than prejudice (education should take a lesson from industry in developing recruitment packages); b) antidiscrimination employment laws that prohibit identification of race and subsequently prevent the identification of minority applicants for constructive employment; c) the regarding of blacks as "hard risks" in the "soft risk" profession of teaching; d) the thinking by blacks themselves that blacks should teach blacks and whites, whites. There must be a concentrated effort to increase the number of black candidates available for suburban schools by improving teacher recruitment procedures, replacing the antiquated antidiscrimination employment laws, and encouraging foundations to support pilot projects. (JA)

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Recruiting Black Teachers for White Suburbs

A report of a national survey to determine the obstacles which deter the recruitment of blacks as teachers in the suburban and rural schools of the United States.

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I wish to thank the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools E. Joseph Kegan, and the faculty of Wappingers Central School for granting me sabbatical leave to work on this project. I am especially grateful to Dr. John Ether, whose interest in my project was responsible for my appointment to the staff of the State University of New York at Albany, to Miss Lois Wilson of the New York State Teachers Association, and the many people at NEA who provided contacts, materials, and advice.

Sincerely

Dennis J. Hannan
22 November 1969

In the metropolitan innercities of the United States, and in those smaller cities with large minority concentrations, much commendable effort is being expended to bring blacks and other dedicated minority group teachers into contact with students of the same minorities, but in our rural and suburban areas--majority America, the majority whites of our decision making future electorate are being educated by dedicated, but white, teachers. At best, these white teachers can only bring a well-intentioned vicarious experience of minority America to the white middle class elementary and secondary students in our rural and suburban schools. Blacks and other minority group members, as teachers, in direct teaching contact with our majority white middle class students, could help prevent further social polarization of majority and minorities; could best interpret minority experience and potential to our youth; and could provide--on student, faculty, and community levels--a laboratory of constructive social interchange. The electorate which will decide the future of today's obvious innercities problem is not solely, or even largely, residential to urban areas, but is being "educated" in the white-taught classrooms of white America. The degree to which we really interculturally educate these boys and girls is, in my opinion, the degree to which the next generation will cooperate with American minorities in attempting to solve our common problems.

It was with this thesis in mind that I undertook, during a sabbatical leave last year, to try to gain some insights as to the identity of those impediments which block our recruitment of blacks as elementary and secondary school teachers in our rural and suburban schools. Is prejudice the stumbling block? Does the fault lie in the manner in which America recruits its teachers? Does the urban black innercity priority preclude any successful extension of black recruitment into suburban schools? These were but a few of my concerns, as I started out, by letter survey and personal interview, to assess our suburban recruitment of black teachers.

Much of the difficulty encountered in recruiting black teachers has very little to do with negritude or prejudice and has much to do with the simplistic and outmoded attitudes and procedures of American education as regards recruitment in general. The majority of our schools depend upon hit-or-miss contacts with placement agencies in departments or schools of education, or with commerical agencies which charge the successful candidate, not the hiring school, approximately 5% of the first year salary. Some city schools, or large suburban districts, may employ an assistant superintendent for personnel, or a recruitment officer who is responsible for the initial contacts with potential candidates. In most such situations, however, the geographic range of recruitment is budgetarily limited to a radius of a few hundred miles.

As a result, the vast majority of the schools of the United States are thoroughly inbred with the same kind of candidate, from the same socio-economic class, from the same general locality, and from the same colleges. Arriving at his new school, the young teacher can jell into a complacency of attitude, subject matter, method, and educational philosophy--or lack of one. As he comfortably fits into his niche in the faculty room, there will be very little talk or action in that smoky haze that will in any way challenge his experiential base or endanger his regionally oriented middle class value system.

And so, as we hire each such teacher, and make a lifetime investment in him of from $200,000 to $300,000, let's compare our inept, pennypinching, non-productive recruitment methods with those used in American industry. Realizing the longitudinal dimension of their personnel investments, our large industrial organizations range the country for talent. Sharp, eager, well-paid young college types are sent back to their campuses or college leagues to compete for the cream of their subject matter crop. Mammoth and expensive publicity campaigns mounted by individual firms and their consultants supplement such campus contacts. To advertise in one black directory in my bibliography would cost a school district $1200 per page. Try that one out on your local school superintendent, or his budget conscious board of education or citizens committee! Industrial candidates chosen as potential employees are

encouraged to fly in to corporate headquarters, at company expense, for a thorough mutual examination. Many large and small business firms employ the services of management consultant agencies, who not only handle publicity contacts, recruitment and orientation of new employees, but in the case of minority recruitments, provide sensitivity training and other forms of preparation for the local white corporate staffs.

An interesting sidelight of my survey of black recruitment was provided by visits to black management consulting firms. Ironically, these firms, dedicated to the advancement of blacks, cannot afford to be involved in educational recruitment of black teachers for the very reasons I have outlined. Until the American taxpayer learns that Civil War veterans are no longer coming in on mule back to apply in person to the local school board president down at the feed store, we will not be able to interest black management or black social leadership in helping us to staff our suburban schools.

And until the educational establishment and its taxpayers, like the business community, are willing to pay for a realistic recruitment package, involving nationwide on-the-spot recruitment, advertising by brochure and directory, and utilizing campus and professional education media, we will not attract or secure teachers representative of the total spectrum of American society--Yalies out of Choate, American Indians, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Eurasians, teachers from

all regions of our vast country, or blacks from the south or from our northern innercities.

Another deterrent to recruitment of black teachers is the body of antidiscrimination employment laws in our various states. Years ago, in many of our states, we in education, as well as employers in other professions and occupations, tried to protect our minority colleagues with equal opportunity legislation which tried to disguise or ban racial or religious identification. In many states it is illegal to ask for such information on application forms. Today, when we are trying to identify these applicants for constructive purposes of employment, we are defeated by the very laws which were established to protect these minorities. I could show you many letters in my files which answered questions on black recruitment with factual, or if I were to stoop to inference--sanctimonious disclaimers based on local or state laws forbidding the use of information drawn from ethnic or religious identification. The very applicants themselves, as evidenced by the computer data available from the NEA Search project, ignore or refuse the opportunity to identify their race. Somehow we must educate our legislators, and the members of the minorities they would protect, that it is to the advantage of the minority candidate to have his race identified.

If we agree that too few blacks are currently in training or available to accept positions in education, we had better ask another embarrassing question about educators in general. Are we "soft risk" professionals,--civil service, security conscious types? Are educators, in the main, second or third generation Americans whose inherited immigrant value system has predetermined their type of vocational choice? Would such a supposition, in addition to the facts of antiquated recruitment methods, partly explain not only our own middle class inbreeding, but also explain the reluctance of blacks to enter our profession? The northern city black who has faced and overcome impediments of social and economic deprivation and has achieved his baccalaureate or master's degree--is he interested in education as a career? Or is he, by the very nature of his rigorous conditioning, a "hard risk" candidate for more prestigious and far more remunerative professions--law, medicine, engineering? And the southern black, historically deprived of his native culture and currently discriminated against economically, educationally and socially--can we expect many such candidates to leave the impoverished security of their ethnic south for the uncertainties of life in northern white suburbs? We will have to take a much longer, deeper look at current experiments in black teacher recruitment from urban and rural backgrounds, north and south, before we will know where our most productive thrust should be directed.

I hope I am wrong, but I can only infer from my discussions with urban black leadership--organizational, political, and educational, that we are not going to attract many urban blacks into rural or suburban education,--and certainly not because of any agreement with or commitment to my thesis, namely, that it is essential for white suburban middle class students to have face-to-face long term association with black professionals. From east to west, from Boston to Oakland, I was told that the place of the educated urban black is with his own people, and specifically with black youth, not out in our comfortable suburbs educating young whitey! It is one thing to teach in the Mid-Hudson Valley in suburban Dutchess County and cooly theorize about the needs of our majority white youth--that we must provide the experience upon which they will responsibly act as the voting majority of the next decade,--but it is quite another matter to argue with the immediate priorities of the American innercity. Those of us who are concerned about the responsible adult behavior of our young white students see the increasing polarization of American society from the comfortable perspective of the suburb. We have read the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders with dismay, and with even greater concern, the follow-up volume entitled <u>One Year Later</u>, in which Urban America, Inc., and the Urban Coalition documented the widening gulf between blacks and whites.

I may read such evidence as proof for the necessity of long-term suburban exposure to black professionals, but you won't peddle that thesis very far among the grim realities of Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Watts, or Oakland. A black college president in California, harassed on the day of my interview by a demonstration on his own majority black campus, leaned back in his chair and asked me, "So what if you succeed, what will you get, a few Uncle Toms?" In Boston, the black director of a graduate teacher education program bluntly told me, "Leave my teachers alone; go on home and make your white teachers do the job." Or as one black educator in New York remarked to me, "You're beautiful, but stupid!"

These on-the-spot realists are also quick to point out the city experience of black professionals who have been shunted aside for decades when the administrative plums were being distributed. They wonder at the future of showcase blacks on white faculties; they cynically question the future of black paraprofessionals,--will they ultimately be trained and given complete professional certification, status, and commensurate salary? Ironically, while the Southern Education Reporting Service issued a midly optimistic report on the acceptance of black teachers into integrated southern schools, the National Education Association completed a survey which showed the subtle displacement of administrators once their formerly black schools were integrated.

How many northern schools are recruiting these black administrators?

But such considerations aside, black leadership--in the movements, in government, and especially in education, stresses the need for black teachers within the innercities. I believe that we have no choice but to recognize such an innercity priority, especially on the part of the urban oriented, urban trained teachers. But such a recognition of priority does not mean that we must write off our attempts to get black teachers into our suburbs on something better than a quid pro quo ratio. The excellent school systems suburban to Chicago provide a fine example which might well be emulated by other American schools so situated. These systems have succeeded in recruiting many fine black teachers who were trained in Chicago, and who still live within Chicago, commuting daily to their jobs. In one sense this may not be ideal in that such professionals are not realistically a part of the community within which they teach, but as compensation, they can bring the innercity experience to the suburbs, and hopefully, tell it like it is.

Contrasted with the difficulty of recruiting northern urban blacks for suburban teaching, the recruitment of southern candidates would appear far more promising. In New York State, the University of Rochester, the Genesee Valley School Development Center, the Monroe County Human

Relations Commission, and several schools suburban to Rochester have cooperated in a program through which seniors from southern black colleges are brought to these Rochester suburbs to do their student teaching. Last year, of more than thirty such student teachers, eight were successfully recruited to return as regular staff members. Initially underwritten by the above organizations, with generous contributions from local service clubs, the average expense per student teacher was approximately $1000, which would make the cost of each actual teacher placement about $5000. In terms in which we in education have traditionally been conditioned to think, this is expensive, but if we compare such placement costs with those in industry, and consider the career investment a community makes in each teacher, such an initial expense is a pittance well spent.

In a state such as New York, where a governor puts his erection of a memorial Capitol mall on a much higher priority rating than state aid to education, one is apt to become pessimistic as tax-laden citizens strike out against school budgets as the only public tax against which they have a vote. Somehow we must educate our well-intentioned public, and their poll conscious legislators, to the realities of the overall education crisis. Somehow we must let them see that their general taxes pay for cost-plus industrial recruitment--and rightly so, but that when they paradoxically skimp on educational recruitment they are cheating themselves and their children.

Let's optimistically assume for the moment that we eventually overcome some of our recruitment problems and are able to attract more black teachers into our rural and suburban communities. Let's exchange roles for a minute. You have been employed to teach in a black, or Puerto Rican, or Mexican-American community. Your employer has arranged for your rental or purchase of housing, and your fellow employees have been prepared for your coming. Assuming that the enlightened community has spent tax money to recruit you and prepare for your professional participation in your job and your acceptance in the community, can you even begin to start to empathize with the cultural loneliness you would inevitably feel? Middle management blacks in industry have told me of their very normal initial loneliness as they are engulfed in white suburbia--and not so much by the isolated instances of misunderstanding, or of subtle or overt prejudice, but by their own ethnic isolation, and the over-reaction and over-compensation of well-meaning white co-workers and neighbors. Here is certainly another area of our mutual problem that our suburban communities--majority and minorities--must carefully explore. Is it merely a matter of numbers? If so, what can suburban communities do in the meantime? Must the isolate black be, or become an Uncle Tom, or can we move fast enough to provide normal ethnic group relationships within even marginally integrated communities?

What then are the facts, or at least our best inferences, regarding the recruitment of black teachers for white suburbs? We must first disenchant our liberal critics as to their easy accusation of prejudice. Certainly there are some racial bigots in our communities, on our school boards, and among our faculty colleagues, who would use subtle--or if they could get away with it--overt pressure to keep blacks from teaching in our lily white schools. There will continue to be recruitment and hiring officials who will apply the same rigid input criteria--college accreditation, standardized examinations and other local certification standards--without including the contribution of blackness--of race iteself, as an individual criterion to be included in the consideration of the black applicant. <u>But the fact remains that there are currently very few black candidates available for our suburban schools</u>. And ironically, this very fact may give comfort to, and be used by our few community bigots or those antediluviates in our educational establishment who have neither the desire nor the courage to lead our profession into realistic, democratic, but expensive recruitment process.

We must, however, exploit those leads we have. The Chicago experience can be studied and adapted for those suburbia contiguous to all the metropolitan areas in the United States. University and college centers can duplicate the Rochester experiment. Private schools can follow the lead of Dr. Robert C. Atmore of the Choate School in

establishing minority recruitment procedures. We can encourage our state teachers associations to undertake activities similar to those of the Equal Educational Opportunity Project of the New York State Teachers Association. Through nationwide professional associations such as NEA we can also establish equal opportunities procedures which can temporarily circumvent our antiquated, antidiscrimination state laws which currently negate their original intent. We can expect our recruitment officials, even within their strictly circumscribed geographies and emasculated budgets, to advertise in black media and actively recruit beyond those few colleges and agencies where they are so conveniently comfortable.

To take the longer view, we must encourage foundations to support pilot projects in several aspects of minority recruitment--varied models of the Rochester and Chicago experiments, and goal expectation and scholarship projects in both our northern innercities and in the rural south, so that young blacks may know that teaching jobs actually await the completion of subsidized college training. We must encourage, support and, most important--use such services as those supplied by NEA Search--the National Education Association's pioneer computer service for job identification and placement. Utilizing the results of our own local efforts, and data from foundation and education association projects, we must pressure the United States

Office of Education to overcome its Congress-conscious neurosis for demonstrably immediate results and have the courage to approve and demand funding for longitudinally effective projects for minority teacher recruitment. The Congress, with its own understandable priority for short term show-and-tell results--services, software, hardware--and thus responsible for the diversified failure of many of the ESEA Title projects with built-in demands for immediacy--must have the courage to fund such long term projects as suburban recruitment of black teachers, and longer term sub-projects such as black vocational teacher goal orientation programs in the south and in the northern innercities. Congress, HEW and its Office of Education, must transcend their understandable but myopic preoccupation with political legerdemain and face the reality that the reversal of racial polarity will ultimately be implemented in the voting booths of rural and suburban America.

With the growing cooperation of all segments of the educational establishment--the United States Office of Education, state education departments, colleges and schools of education, teacher organizations such as NEA and the New York State Teachers Association, subject matter associations such as the National Council of Teachers of English, minority organizations and the foundation--perhaps we can prove the real, if relative immediacy of recruiting

blacks to teach in our suburban schools. If we succeed in dragging our poor little ineffective educational recruitment process whimpering into the twentieth century--if not into the 1970s--perhaps we will also accomplish the dynamic democratization of our entire profession, so that in some not too distant day, the best, most competent members of every ethnic and economic sector of American life will be proud to be, and be called, "Teacher."